DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 265 971 PS 015 640

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TITLE Make More Time for Laughter in a Preschool Setting.
PUB DATE Sep 85
NOTE 100p.; Practicum Report, Nova University. Best available copy.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Practicum Papers (043) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Childhood Needs; Comedy; Creativity; *Curriculum Development; Educational Environment; *Humor; Lesson Plans; Personality Traits; *Preschool Children; Preschool Education; *Program Development; *Stress Management
IDENTIFIERS *Laughter

ABSTRACT

Based on the idea that laughter and humor are basic components of a healthy childhood, this practicum paper emphasizes the concern that preschool programs have become too academic and are creating stress for children. Similarly, adults in preschool settings, pressured by parents and public school academic expectations, have become too serious in their work with children. The goals of the practicum were to create, plan, implement, and evaluate a program that would unite parents, children, and staff in a serious effort to find ways to initiate humor and laughter into the preschool educational experience. Components of the practicum included developing a preschool environment that was more conducive to laughter, giving chidren more flexibility in a less teacher-controlled classroom, helping teachers to be sensitive to humor, encouraging parents to find ways to extend childhood through play and laughter, developing a file of humorous incidents, and developing a list of appropriate children's books that stimulate laughter. Results indicate that (1) the implementation of the program brought a lively environment into the preschool setting; (2) staff members and parents were helped to understand children's humor; (3) young and old were encouraged to use laughter with preschool children; and (4) staff and parents became aware of the age differences in children's humor responses. Following conclusions and recommendations given at the close of the paper, extensive appendices provide sample evaluation instruments, outlines for parent/staff seminars, and a children's book list. (Author/DST)

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Make More Time for Laughter

in a Preschool Setting

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NOVA UNIVERSITY

SEP 23 1985

Make More Time for Laughter in a Preschool Setting

by

Barbara B. Hamlin

Nova University

Cluster XVI

Practicum I Report Submitted to the Faculty
of the Early Childhood Program
in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Education

September 1985

PS 015640

Laughter

PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

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Date of Final Approval of Report

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ABSTRACT

Make Time for Laughter in a Preschool Setting to Lessen Stress and Expand Childhood. Hamlin, Barbara B., 1985: Practicum Report, Nova University Ed.D. Program in Early Childhood. Descriptors: Preschool Children/Preschool Education/Young Children/Humor/Comedy/Laugh/Personality Traits/Creativity/ Kindergarten/Child Development Centers/Elementary Education

This practicum was based on the idea that laughter and humor are basic components for a healthy childhood. There is a concern that preschool programs are becoming too academic, adding stress to children already under stress. There is a concern that adults in preschool settings, pressured by parents and public school academic expectations, are becoming too serious in their work with children.

The goals of this practicum were to create, plan, implement, and evaluate a program that would unite parents, children, and staff in a serious effort to find ways to initiate humor and laughter into the preschool educational experience. Components of the practicum included developing a preschool environment that was more conducive to laughter, giving children more flexibility in a less teacher-controlled classroom, helping teachers to be sensitive to humor, encouraging parents to find ways to extend childhood through play and laughter, developing a file of humorous incidents, and developing a list of appropriate children's books that stimulate laughter.

Results indicated that: (1) the implementation of this practicum brought a lively environment into the preschool setting; (2) staff members and parents were helped to understand children's humor; (3) young and old were encouraged to use laughter with preschool children; and (4) staff and parents became aware of the age differences in children's humor responses.

Make More Time for Laughter in a Preschool Setting

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background Information

The Children's Center of New Milford, Connecticut, is 1 of 106 state-funded day care facilities in Connecticut. It is licensed by the State Department of Health; it operates under the guidelines of the State Department of Human Resources; and it is fiscally responsible to the State Income and Maintenance Department and to the Town of New Milford to which it is a delegate agent. The funded program for 30 children has been in operation for 14 years--the first 9 in a church facility, the past 5 in its own house bought and owned by the Board of Directors of The Children's Center.

Parallel to the state-funded program, the center operates a private program in separate but adjoining space with its own budget, special services, staff, and debts. These extra services, unlike the state-funded program which offers only all day care for financially eligible working parents, provide broader facilities such as nursery school, before and after-school programs, alternate kindergartens, half-day care and snow-day care.

The two programs, private and funded, are separate on paper and in some space. In reality, they overlap as children

between the ages of 3 and 8 interact and share materials and staff. Some spaces, like the nursery school, are separate. The philosophy of the center is not to separate or discriminate against children with economic differences. The nursery school children share many programs, trips, and meals with others in the center. The Children's Center, as the name implies, is for all children, not just for those living under poverty guidelines as the state's enrollments often require. Private and state-funded services find an enrollment of 80 children cared for by a combined staff of 15 and supervised by the director who founded the program in 1971.

The Children's Center's handsome Tudor home, surrounded by two well-equipped play yards, stands on a small hill which overlooks the town's center colonial green. Here the town hall, many stores, large churches, library, and banks are the center of activity for New Milford's 20,000 population. The Children's Center belongs to this mainstream because it is within walking distance of these community services. The center's children, 3 years and older, are a part of the library weekly reading program; they visit town hall to deliver material to the selectman's or the comptroller's office; they purchase equipment from the local stores; they make deposits at the bank and attend organ concerts during the week. The center is also on the public school bus route. Families who must be at work before the school bus arrival bring their children to the center where they are cared for until bus time.

The after-school program buses children to the center for much later family pick-up.

The 11-hour day is spent in a homelike atmosphere. The smell of freshly cooked meals tantalizes teachers and children. The environment is aesthetically pleasing--prints of Mary Cassatt's paintings hang on uncluttered walls and music fills the air after lunch when rest time comes. It is a safe place to work and play, guarded from the road by fences on the outside and where all safety precautions are taken on the inside. It is comfortable even for the teachers who find a couch in each classroom a natural necessity. It is as accessible as the town in which it is located.

Money problems constantly intrude on the center's operation. Neither state funding nor private fees can meet the $12,000 yearly deficit. Spring and fall fund drives try to resolve this issue as well as the constant search for grant money. In spite of deficits, a new addition is underway. A large, self-contained classroom with its own entrance, bathrrom, and mini-cooling facilities will house the before- and after-school children. This separate space will allow bigger children more freedom of movement, more private space for belongings, and storage space for materials more appropriate for their age. This space will also house the nursery school after the public school children have been bused away in the morning. The new area will offer space for night meetings with parents or other community personnel and much-needed space for board meetings,

now held in a multipurpose, smaller room with small chairs! The funds for this project have been partially committed by 100% of the Board of Directors. The balance due will be raised in a two-year capital drive.

Community Information

In the early 17th Century, pioneers and pilgrims in search of more land left the northern shores of Long Island, Milford and Stratford, Connecticut, and pushed west through the untamed wilderness following the river road of the Housatonic. This interior highway led them to the fertile valleys and streams surrounding the base of Candlewood Mountain, an area already inhabited by the Waramaug Indians. In 1707, land was purchased from the Waramaug chief, thereby starting the New Milford Plantation to be approved five years later as a township.

A town meeting in 1721 responded to the request of 25 families to have a public school. The fertile land yielded crops of corn, rye, and flax. Every considerable stream soon became dotted with small manufacturing operations. The mills for grist, lumber, and flax shared new labor opportunities with mechanics, artificers, and wheelwrights. Rivers were harnessed for water power and wood from the abundant forests provided fuel to fire smelters. Iron ore and limestone were found in abundance within the town's own borders (Orcutt, 1882).

By 1840, the railroad reached out from Bridgeport. Signs of the Industrial Revolution began to shift families from

farms to factories. As long as tobacco flourished agriculture and industry prospered side by side until farming could no longer compete with industry's higher wage or its profitable use of acreage. Tobacco, no longer profitable, shifted the economic balance to commerce and industry. New Milford struggled through growing pains until a new population explosion blasted natives from their self-sufficient, almost ingrown economic system, forcing them to adopt a broader view of industrial development in the form of export trade. The large tracks of flat land, river and railroad outlets attracted a new settler--the corporate giant. Nestle's Company came first, soon to be followed by Kimberly-Clark, Scoville, and many more.

Today one finds less and less open land, an occasional skeleton outline of a tobacco barn as well as rivers polluted by industrial waste. Networks of highways bring many to the area with different ethnic and cultural backgrounds adding a new vitality and force to the traditional and closed setting. A few clapboard houses remain around the town's central green, but change and growth have disturbed the serenity of this New England village. New Milford, now the largest township in Connecticut, continues to struggle for its identity and its place in the fast-moving age of technology. Many children, no longer nourished by the church and the nuclear family, must find alternate care. Child care facilities, private and funded, are important community requirements.

Writer's Role and Responsibilities

The writer is the Director of The Children's Center and a former head start teacher. She has a Master's Degree in Early Childhood Supervision from Bank Street College in New York City and is a candidate in the Doctoral Program in Early Childhood at Nova University in Florida. Her responsibilities are many and varied. She must try to bring children's needs to public attention, try to gain financial support from the community itself, as well as the state, and try to be a contributing advocate for the rights of children through legislative action on the state and local levels.

The specific jobs of the director are many and varied.

Financial responsibility: (a) monitor three state budgets and one private one; (b) be accountable to the state, the town (as delegate agent to the state) and to the board of directors; (c) coordinate state-funded and private programs keeping budgets separate yet programs overlapping; (d) supervise all fund drives; (e) apply for grants and special services; and (f) approve purchases for the school and supervise payroll.

Administrative responsibility: (a) report to the board monthly on the financial and educational health of the center; (b) participate as an ex-officio member on all board committees; (c) assume responsibilities for staff recruitment, training and supervision, and weekly staff meetings; (d) facilitate and encourage staff development through workshops, conferences, and

seminars; (e) evaluate programs and staff performance; (f) maintain student and staff records; (g) register all children; (h) contact parents daily and provide special conferences and parent meetings; (i) oversee food service for nutritional value and cost; and (j) constantly monitor house and grounds for safety factors.

Liason work and public relations: (a) try to develop bridge between preschool and the public school; (b) develop a network of preschool directors for developing goals for public awareness and support; (c) try to keep preschool news in local newspaper through articles, pictures, and interviews; and (d) prepare a slide show and deliver it to town organizations.

Personal commitment: (a) continue personal growth through degree work at Nova University; (b) attend selected conferences; (c) be an advocate for children in the public forum; and (d) serve as board member on another day care facility.

The Children's Center must represent the best in services for children and their families. It is the director's responsibility to see that it does. Public school pressure to lower the age of admission to the system is putting academic stress on the preschool child. Parents want their children ready for school and able to read and write before they have mastered the tricycle. It is the director's job to supervise a program suitable for preschool children which is fun and flexible, stimulating though serious, playful as well as purposeful.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Statement

The members of the teaching staff of the Children's Center have degrees or associate degrees in education. Their dedication to children's growth and development is sincere and organized. The head teacher is responsible for the monthly curriculum, special language development, scheduling staff hours and vacations, and getting substitutes. She oversees the weekly lesson plans from the teachers, helps them get materials, and serves as an intermediary between the staff and the director.

Lesson plans, teacher initiated projects, time schedules, and academic emphasis on learning skills tended to produce an inflexible and rigid environment. In this setting, it was difficult for the preschool child to initiate conversation, explore activities, known and unknown, and to be free in spirit to enjoy the pleasure of laughter. McGhee (1979) found laughter and development of humor to be closely related to a child's intellectual, social, and emotional development.

Children under stress (Ward, 1984) should be helped to find relief from stress in the happy, flexible classroom where laughter is commonplace. Staff also would be helped to find more chances to laugh and to relax if they understood, recognized, and encouraged children's laughter and humor.

The problem, therefore, was two-fold: (a) to encourage more laughter from children, thus making a serious day into a happier one and (b) to keep the free spirit of childhood alive through laughter.

Problem Documentation

Lesson plans (see Appendix A), now being used, were analyzed to see where the project oriented activities or academic training could be made more fun. They were analyzed to see if free time allowed for child-initiated activities, for physical involvement, and for responsible interaction between child and teacher and between child and child. The result of the lesson plan analysis was that lesson plans proved to be a time schedule of activity, not a plan for children's cognitive and social growth. The plans did include sufficient free time for peer group interaction, a necessary component for social development. The plans included projects and activities for cognitive growth although they were not identified as such. However, nowhere did the teacher plan activities to encourage laughter responses during structured or free time. The reason for this is that: (a) lesson plans were being used for scheduling time; (b) all activities were not planned with the stated specific goals in mind; and (c) plans for laughter were not considered necessary.

Four classrooms were taped in the morning, partly in a structured time, partly in a free play setting. The tapes

helped to record the number of situations when laughter occurred; the nature of the laughter; and whether it was spontaneous, social responsive, or nonexistent. This recorded information was transferred to tally sheets.

The tally sheets were reviewed and the following results were found: (a) only two teachers initiated laughter responses two times; (b) hardly any children in the 3-year-old group laughed during the taping hour; and (c) 4-year-olds were more socially active than the 3-year-olds, frequently using laughter as a social skill. Four-year-olds also laughed in response to fantasy, language, and word sounds. The 5-year-olds and 6-year-olds had no laughter profile on the tally sheets.

Problem Causes

The fact that children were under stress can be supported by investigating their economic background, family constellation, and social and emotional support systems. In Connecticut, the poverty rate for children under 6 increased 58% between 1970 and 1980. Connecticut mothers in the labor force increased 52% in 10 years. Less than one-third of the children needing day care could be accommodated in licensed facilities (Ward, 1984). According to Wolfenstein (1954), there was anxiety from just being a child in an adult world.

The stress affecting staff, and often reflected in staff turnover, and feelings of inadequacies and poor self-image were pervasive, especially found in those hired on the Title XX

and Work Incentive (WIN) Programs (see Appendix B). These people, either on welfare or just off of it, earned minimum wage. A Connecticut family of three on welfare received $453. per month. Federal budget cuts in 1981 terminated over 1,000 families from food stamps and almost 7,000 families suffered reductions in benefits. Poverty was indeed stressful; so was single parenting, sex discrimination, alcohol and drug abuse, and divorce. Profiles of the children enrolled on the funded program revealed 23 out of 30 children were from single parent homes and 13 were below poverty guidelines and had no fee to pay. Profiles of the welfare staff showed all to be victims of societal pressures (see Appendix C).

Some 500,000 preschoolers in Connecticut under the age of 6 needed care while parents work (Ward, 1984). This fundamental social change made day care a basic need for the American family. Are we one of the few industrialized countries that does not have a comprehensive national day care policy? Who is responsible for children? Is it the state, the public schools, the home, or the health department?

It would be inappropriate if day care fell under the exclusive domain of any one of these agencies. However, a national policy and some federal and state funding could make clear goals for our children. Do we want them to be problem solvers and decision makers, willing to reach for excellence with confidence and risk? Flexible thinking, self-esteem, and inquiring minds are nourished in the early years of childhood

in a nonthreatening, loving, and happy atmosphere. Day care is under stress to provide this without money, guidelines, or public support. Heavy emphasis on academic work has reached down to the public school kindergarten program making it more necessary than ever for preschoolers to have freedom to play, to practice, and to laugh (Schilling, 1985).

Related Literature Review

Several sources begin to give a broad understanding of children's humor, how to recognize it, how to provoke it, and how to share in its universal appeal through literature. McGhee (1979) suggested that absence of humor and laughter in children was a sign of distress; that humor and laughter were essential to mental health; that a tendency to want to share one's humor with others remained a strong characteristic of most children. Wolfenstein (1954) claimed that the ability to joke was an important emotional resource--a way of making light of a disappointment. Helmers (1968) seemed to feel that a child's need for order was strong. When the child found the order unshakeable, he expressed his relief through laughter. He felt that children's creation of nonsense and absurdity in jokes was really aimed at reconfirming their belief that the world was organized and orderly. Leacock (1935) offered the idea that laughter might have originated long before speech as a sort of natural physical expression, or outburst, of one's feeling suddenly good, suddenly victorious. Freud (1916)

found that jokes expressed sexual and hostile motives which would be condemned if they came out in a more direct form.

Barnum, Louisburg, and Pollio (1984) reported on an experiment which described the overall pattern of events evoking laughter and smiling in nursery school children. Some clear findings were produced, one of which concerned the factor of gender where no difference was observed in the frequency of ratable laugh events for boys and girls in the nursery school setting. This was in contrast to the literature (McGhee, 1979) which reported gender differences in both the initiating and response to laugh and smile events.

It is important to remember that play is a natural and important activity for children. Preschools should not overly structure playtime, order it, or eliminate it. Play is important business of early childhood and, according to Reid (1967), learning in play is the foundation for intellectual development. Accompanied often by laughter, playtime is childhood and belongs to every child.

Monson (1974) found that humor in literature, as in life, was derived from the universal problems of the human condition. She reported on the configurational theory of humor which explained some of the laughter as enjoyment of the sudden insight that came when things fell into place. She also referred to the incongruity and surprise theories of humor. She felt that humorous writing afforded an excellent source of material to help children become aware of their own responses.

Sponseller (1974) was concerned when early learning was defined as being only academic learning and play was taken out of the curriculum to achieve these goals. She saw play as a medium through which a child could be master of any environment of his choice. Theories of play broadened Freud's idea that play activities served as a catharsis for children to Piaget's thought that play was a way of taking the outside world and manipulating it so that if fit the child's present organizational scheme. Other dimensions of play theory included play as a function of competence motivation (Ellis, 1973) and the arousal seeking theory. Lieberman (1965) developed a set of criteria for playfulness which included physical, social, cognitive, spontaneity, manifest joy, and a sense of humor. Play is where the intellect, the emotions, and the will join forces to carry a child forward to new levels of coping with his expanding world (Athey, 1974).

Eastman (1937) had four laws of humor. The third one states that being in fun is a condition most natural to childhood and that children at play revealed the humorous laugh in its simplest and most omnivorous form. Play and laughter belong with children wherever they are, even in a preschool setting.

No literature was found to suggest consciously promoting humor and laughter through play in the preschool classroom.

CHAPTER III
ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Statement of General Goals

This practicum was designed to encourage more opportunities for laughter for staff, parents, and children associated with The Children's Center. It was designed to unite parents, children, and staff in a serious effort to find ways to initiate humor and laughter into preschool educational experience.

Goals for the children of the center included: (a) more flexible programming and purposeful planning for the encouragement of laughter and (b) extending childhood through play and laughter.

Goals for the teachers included: (a) more flexible programming and purposeful planning for the encouragement of laughter; (b) building up an awareness that humor and laughter are important components for cognitive growth, socialization, and for relief of stress and anxiety; (c) finding increased pleasure in working with children; and (d) providing for laughter in lesson plans.

Goals for parents included building an awareness that humor and laughter are important components for cognitive growth, relief of stress, and socialization.

Specific Objectives

The specific objectives for this practicum were to:

1. develop a preschool environment that was more conducive to laughter;

2. give children more flexibility in a less teacher-controlled classroom and to hear more laughter during the day;

3. help teachers to be more sensitive to humor;

4. help teachers encourage laughter through their daily lesson plans;

5. encourage parents to be sensitive to humor;

6. encourage parents to find ways to extend childhood through play and laughter;

7. develop a file of humorous incidents, collected by staff and parents, related to children;

8. develop a list of appropriate children's books that stimulate laughter.

Performance Objectives

The performance objectives for this practicum were:

1. that 50% more incidents of laughter would occur in the preschool environment as measured by pre- and posttally sheet numbers I and II;

2. that 50% more opportunities for laughter would occur in the preschool environment as teachers planned for purposeful laughter as measured by original lesson plans contrasted with final plans;

3. that teachers would demonstrate understanding of the various stages in the development of humor through discussion, workshops, shared experiences as evidenced by the collection of a file of humorous incidents, a list of children's books that stimulate laughter and the response of an informal pre- and postquestionnaire;

4. that parents would demonstrate increased sensitivity to humor by reporting humorous incidents occurring at home as evidenced by the collection of a file of humorous incidents and the responses on the informal pre- and postquestionnaire.

Evaluation Instruments

Tally Sheet I (see Appendix D) was designed to translate the taping of the classroom sessions. It noted times when laughter occurred, who laughed, and who was involved in either responding to or initiating the laughter. It also designated the setting, the number of children, staff, and whether it was structured time or free play.

Tally Sheet II (see Appendix E) interpreted the laughter recorded on Tally Sheet I. It placed it in a category such as fantasy, incongruity, word sounds, or social, thus explaining the reason for the laughter. Once various categories of laughter were established, then matched with different age levels, they served as a guide for teachers and parents who then understood the various stages in the development of humor. They then could encourage its development with appropriate age experiences, books, and communication.

Teachers and parents recorded observations of experiences with children's humor and laughter on index cards. These were shared at staff meetings and at parent meetings. This collection might later form the basis of a book on laughter. In making the card collection, staff and parents heightened their awareness of children's humor and causes for laughter.

An informal survey was made before the study began (see Appendix F) and a second survey was made after three months (see Appendix G). These evaluated any feelings of change by staff or parents about laughter and its place in the day of a young child.

Teachers' lesson plans were analyzed to see if there were changes or improvements in planning for laughter compared to the original plans.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Previously Utilized Solution

An informal study done by Balogh (1978) at the Family Resource Center in New Milford, Connecticut, analyzed laughter in a class of nine 3-year-old children with one teacher and one aide. Laughter was first classified by counting the number of times laughter occurred and whether it was initiated or responded to by children or adults over a period of 16 hours of taped time. There were 525 occurrances of laughter of which the teacher contributed to initiating the laughter 161 times and was the sole initiator 50 times. This brief record showed the importance of teacher interaction as well as teacher withdrawal to allow children the freedom to interact with each other. Reasons for the laughter, in a follow-up study by Balogh, showed that most pleasure or laughter was in response to the sound of words, overpretending, absurdities, and excitement or enthusiasm.

McGhee (1979) discussed, at length, incongruities which led to laughter--mislabeling known objects, misnaming children, gender change in children, silly word rhymes, and nonsense words. Three and 4-year-olds could perceive varying degrees of incongruity. Piaget termed this stage "preoperational" and McGhee reminded one that when knowledge came into conflict with appearances, 3- and 4-year-olds relied on the latter.

There was a heavy emphasis on perceptual features of events in preschool humor. Thoughts tended to be intuitive and there was no sense of logic necessary. Ding (1932), in a study of laughing and crying in preschool children, found evidence that laughter reached its peak at 3 years of age. McGhee and Gretzitsky (1973) emphasized that sex-role development had a major effect on children's personality development during preschool years. Because 3- and 4-year-olds were still experiencing anxiety about what it means to be a boy or girl, some did not think it funny to be called by the opposite sex. Those with strongest identification with their own sex took great delight in playfully pretending to be the opposite sex. This sex-inappropriate behavior was hilarious to the confident child.

Wolfenstein (1954) suggested that a young child is apt to feel wholly involved with his words and to feel that he is what he says. Changing his meaning had a similar effect to changing his sex or his name. She thought that at first it was more disturbing than amusing. When the degree of involvement with one's words became, to some extent, reduced then the transformation of their meaning could be taken as harmless and became a joke. Words must be divested of their magical significance before playing with them could become a joke. Since a child felt that words were weighted with magical force, he felt that in learning the names of persons and things he gained a marvelous power over them.

There was evidence that children were under stress. It was felt that laughter provided a release and helped them cope with anxiety. Mindess (1971) suggested that laughter has the power to release one from inhibitions and restrictions under which one lives. The preschool child who felt pressures from parents, teachers, rules and standards, morality, and feelings of inferiority found release through laughter.

Laughter might have originated long before speech as a sort of physical expression or outburst of one's feelings--suddenly good--suddenly victorious. According to Leacock (1935), it was a primitive sort of triumph not unlike the joy expressed when the child knocked down his carefully built tower. This act might be accepted as the destructive principle of primitive (and young) humor at its face value. Children could easily reach back to this primitive humor. He reminded us also, as did McGhee, of the importance of contrast, of incongruity, of disharmony between a thing and its setting, of what ought to be and isn't, and what ought not to be and is.

A preliminary study by Kosslyn (1970) presented 4-year olds and 6-year-olds' recorded audiotapes containing humorous and nonhumorous episodes with and without accompanying canned laughter. The children heard the material alone and then in a group. The study showed that laughter reflected social context, with much more laughter occurring in group situations.

Laughter is highly contagious and McGhee (1979) noted that there was usually a strong action component in the humor of

children below the age of 5 and 6 years. Laughing was typically found to occur in the midst of ongoing play while running, jumping, chasing, and rough-and-tumble play.

There is a difference between child and adult humor simply because of the difference between child and adult thinking. Adults are capable of understanding and creating sophisticated levels of humor. The child's brain is just beginning to master the task (Buffington, 1984). Many situations elicit laughter and Buffington included many that have been discussed such as a personal triumph or victory, a surprise or unexpected turn of events, tickling, a funny story, incongruous situations, and to hide embarassment. Finally, and most fortunately, laughter is positively associated with a sense of well-being, good health, and social safety.

Solution Selected

The solution selected was based on the idea that laughter and humor are basic components for a healthy childhood. For this practicum, it was necessary to try to change the environment of a preschool setting to allow laughter and humor into a rather rigid curriculum. Basically, it was to the staff that this practicum was directed. However, it was also recognized that parents are important designers of the environment and they also were asked to participate in this practicum experience. It was not expected that they would take as active a part as the staff because they were less available.

Research verified the need for laughter in the lives of children to relieve stress and anxiety, to lessen hostility, and to share pleasure and excitement. No research was found to help staff or parents plan to add laughter to the environment of the preschool child.

It was necessary for the members of the staff to learn about the need for laughter before they could be expected to make provision for it in their daily plans. Through classroom tapings, it was necessary to heighten their awareness of the classroom environment as well as their own performances. It was necessary to improve skills of observation and to share mutual discoveries through making a card collection which documented children's humorous responses. Parents participated in this collection and received a summary of results at its completion. It was decided to create a booklist for parents and staff to encourage the use of appropriate age fun books for children.

Presurveys were given first to staff, then to parents to evaluate their ideas of children's humor and laughter. Three months later, a postsurvey was given to see if there was any change of thought or increased awareness, by staff or parents, for the need for laughter in children's lives.

Report of Action Taken

All teachers and aides were asked to participate in the task of increasing time for laughter in the preschool setting.

The first staff meeting explained the practicum, the timing involved, and the participation hoped for from the staff. A short overview of research about children's humor was given by the director. There was unanimous agreement to work on this activity, so implementation began in March 1985. A presurvey was given to staff members (see Appendix F) before taping began which was measured against the postsurvey (see Appendix G) given at the end of the implementation.

The following week taping began in one of the four classrooms. The one tape recorder was moved from room to room. Teachers taped at an early morning hour, turning the recorder on and off themselves, and delivered the one-hour tape to the director.

The director analyzed the tapes (see Appendix H) and recorded on tally sheets (see Appendix I) the amount of laughter heard, the reason for it, who initiated or responded to it, and the ages of the children involved. When the tally sheets were completed, they were shared with the staff at one of the weekly staff meetings. This entire process was repeated twice more at 4-week intervals. The names of all the children were on the tally sheets so it was possible to see if boys or girls were more responsive. It was hoped that McGhee's study that stated that boys laughed more than girls would be upheld or rejected. This thought was soon abandoned when it was discovered that there were 50% more boys than girls enrolled. The writer could not get a balanced sample in any classroom so the idea was abandoned.

The first week was also used to collect lesson plans from teachers to see how they planned their days and to see if time for laughter had been included. Some supportive suggestions were given to the teachers.

The teacher for the 3-year-olds was reminded that her children loved physical activity. Active games such as Duck, Duck, Goose; London Bridge; and Hide and Seek promoted laughter and squeals of delight. Books she read included those with funny word sounds, repetition, or rhyming. The Little Engine that Could and The Cat in the Hat were cited as examples.

The teacher of the 4-year-olds was encouraged to develop more play around word sounds and rhymes. The use of books filled with funny characters who do silly things was encouraged as well as providing energy outlets through gross motor activities such as exercise and dancing.

The teacher of the 5-year-olds was to be aware of incongruities such as trying to do things backwards, making purposeful mistakes, and creating absurd stories.

When the second taping was completed and a tally sheet report made, the next step of implementation was explained. Three-by-five index cards were given to the staff on which they were to record an incident that provoked laughter, the child's age, sex, and the environment in which this situation occurred. Some staff members were mothers as well as teachers and they were asked to observe children at school or their own at home.

Parents and staff members were invited to an evening meeting where the practicum was explained (see Appendix J). The parents were asked to join with the staff in the collection of cards. Parents were given the presurvey which the staff had taken several weeks before. One of the questions on the presurvey asked if parents were willing to come to night meetings. The response was less than 50% in favor of this idea. The second parent meeting (see Appendix K) was poorly attended due to conflicts with other activities. The meeting date was changed once due to a death in the director's family, but attendance did not seem to be affected by the change. Parents stated that night meetings were of little interest and this fact was verified by their poor attendance. The director did nothing to encourage them to come, other than through conversation when the children were being brought to or taken from school.

At another weekly staff meeting, the staff members were asked to submit titles of fun books that had been successfully used in the classroom. Added to this list were more titles, authors, and publishers of books for fun gleaned from Monson's study of Humor in Literature (1974). The completed list was circulated to all parents and staff when the practicum was completed (see Appendix L), whether or not they had taken part in the program.

After the second night meeting, the final card collection was compiled (see Appendix M). This summary identified the

ages of the children, what they laughed at, and their sex. It was put together and distributed to all parents and staff members.

Before the completion of the practicum, the final staff meeting was devoted to analyzing the tally sheet records. This review involved looking at the different ages of the children and studying the reasons for their laughter responses, as they had been taped at three different times. Tables of this information were made and distributed.

A thank-you letter was written to all parents and staff who were involved in the practicum process (see Appendix N).

The spirit which attended the collection of cards was one of fun, interest, and involvement. The implementation time seemed too short to do justice to either the card collection or book lists. Parents had not been included in the book search, which was a mistake. However, there was a positive feeling of fun--especially by the staff, who were often heard comparing cards at break time and enjoying a good laugh.

The calendar plan proved to be at the wrong time of year for parental involvement. The postsurvey showed, in spite of poor attendance, that for those who participated, awareness had been increased for the need for laughter in the preschool setting.

Calendar Plan for Implementation

1st Week:	Full staff meeting to advise members of coming project--that classrooms would be taped, but not the reason for taping.
1st - 3rd Weeks:	20 hours of taping 4 classrooms.
4th Week:	Analyze tapes, make tally scores, compare 3-year-olds' tape with previous study done in 1978.
5th Week:	Full staff meeting. Discuss the findings from the tapes and the tally sheets. Discuss need for laughter by children and adults in classroom. Suggest staff start collecting anecdotes and reports of funny situations.
7th Week:	Parent and staff meeting. Explain to parents the project so far, the need for laughter in all our lives, and that children can be funny. Let staff act out some of collected anecdotes or children's sayings collected in the past 2 weeks. Ask parents to collect anecdotes and hand them in.
9th Week:	Parent meeting. Examine anecdotal records they contributed. Talk about the need for laughter for adults and children.

9th & 10th Weeks: Retape 4 classrooms, analyze tapes, make tally sheets and compare with original.

11th Week: Joint meeting: parents and staff (invite press for newspaper article). Give group results of taping, show any changes. Collect all anecdotal records to be typed and put in collection which will be reproduced and given to all interested.

12th Week: Finalize report for Nova with a report to staff and parents expressing thanks.

14th Week: Library list of appropriate-age, humorous books given to parents.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This practicum was designed to unite children, staff, and parents in finding ways to initiate or respond to humor and encourage laughter in a preschool setting.

Results

The first task was to tape classrooms at three different monthly intervals to see if there was any change in the environment from the first observation to the third. This proved to be an unrealistic task. When the tapes were compared, the environment could not be compared because it did not remain constant. Although the taping was done at the same time of day, the structure and the setting changed from free play to snack time to controlled project time. This made comparisons of class environment impossible and the recording of laughter from a comparative point of view invalid. The result was that no comparison for environmental change could be made.

The staff was asked to turn the tapes on and off. This contributed to their awareness of being taped which made some feel self-conscious; therefore, their work with children was affected. The teacher who had been in the classroom for many years did not mind the taping; the teacher who was new disliked the intrusion of the taping process.

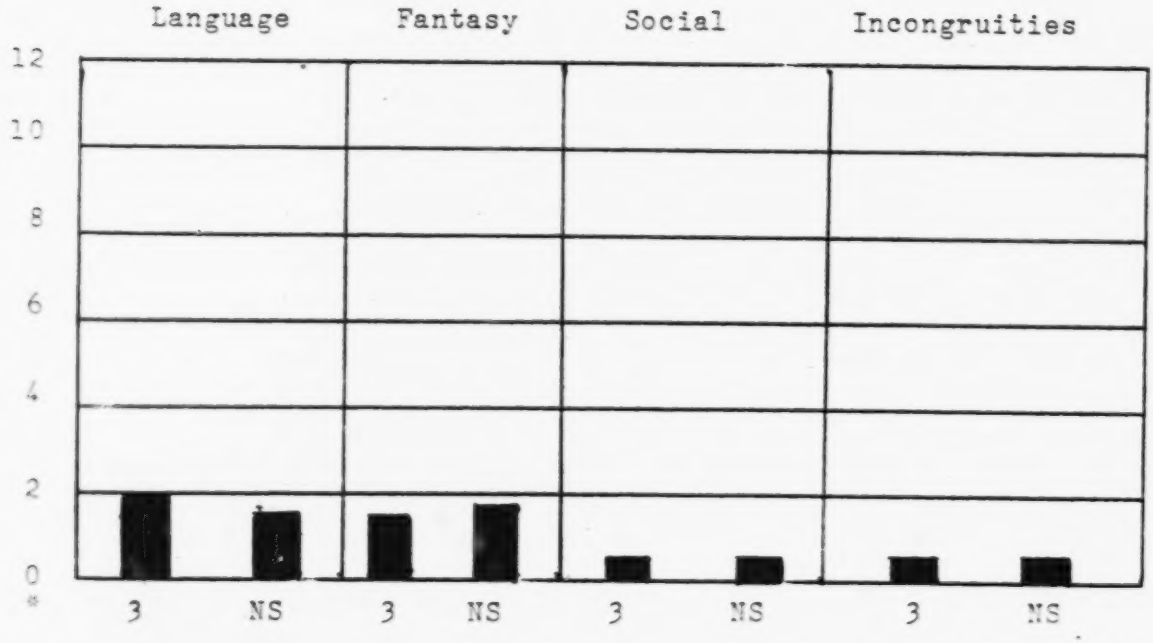
The director, in trying to analyze the tapes, found it difficult to recognize and name specific children without the help of their teachers. It proved difficult to interpret verbal responses or exclamations without seeing the setting, the activities, the facial expressions.

Tally sheets were used to collect the data from the taping (see Appendices D and E). The results of these compilations showed that the staff in the nursery school and the staff in the class for 3-year-olds did not initiate laughter or encourage humorous responses at any time. This does not mean the children did not laugh. Both day care and nursery school children laughed when language was funny, when incongruities were recognized, when fantasies took over, and when social interaction was pleasurable.

It is of interest that the separate tapings of the nursery school and day care settings recorded the same laughter responses (see Table 1). The children's ages were the same but their home environments were very different. Day care children had working single parents who barely made an income above poverty level guidelines. Nursery school children had two parents with only one working, earning a higher income and with less social deprivation. This seems to indicate that children from any environment can and do enjoy the pleasure of laughter.

Table 1

Laughter Response From Taping



Note: 3 = 3-year-olds

NS = Nursery school age

* = Number of Responses

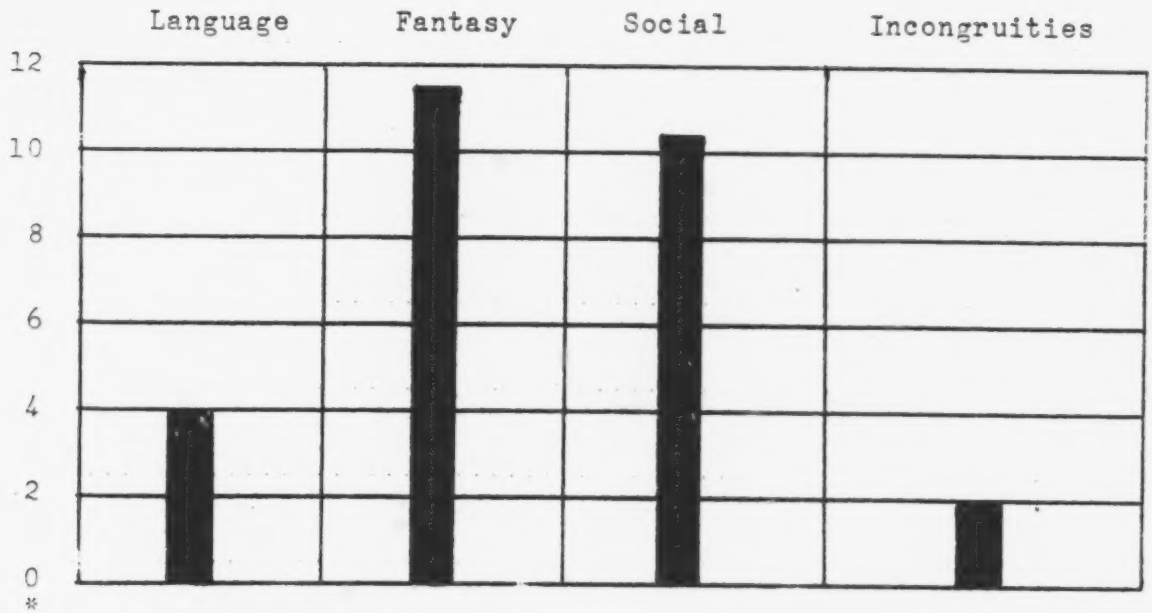
The teacher for the 4-year-olds had the most interaction with the children and recorded the most laughter responses on the tally sheet (see Appendix I). In her structured time, a lesson in pizza making, she was able to provoke laughter by using the word "chef" before each child's name. "Chef" Joshua, "Chef" Tommy, and "Chef" Jason responded to their titles with pleasure.

The new-found sociability of the 4-year-olds made teacher interaction easier than with the 3-year-olds. The sociability included shared flights of fantasy which accompanied creative block building, the network of tracks, and the dress-up corner. The constant conversation, without teacher help, was punctuated with descriptive word sounds such as cars "whooshing" and by rhyming sounds such as "zoom, zoom, go to the moon." The tally sheet recorded the fact that sociability and fantasy were 4-year-olds deepest involvement (see Table 2).

The 5-year-olds found incongruities a source of laughter. Their increase in general knowledge gave them more opportunities to be aware of incorrection. This discovery of wrongness was very exhilarating. Laughter accompanied their teasing, testing, and discovery of adult mistakes (see Table 3). The 5-year-olds enjoyed their more sophisticated use of language in riddles, silly sounds, and incongruous rhymes. When the teacher became

Table 2

Laughter Response From Taping



Note: Subjects were 4-year-olds

* = Number of Responses

aware of the children's pleasure when they discovered her mistakes, she exaggerated them considerably. This made for a lively environment.

In general, the tapings were of interest not to compare the first month's tape with the third month's tape for change in teacher plans to encourage laughter, but rather to take note of the different laughter responses from age group to age group.

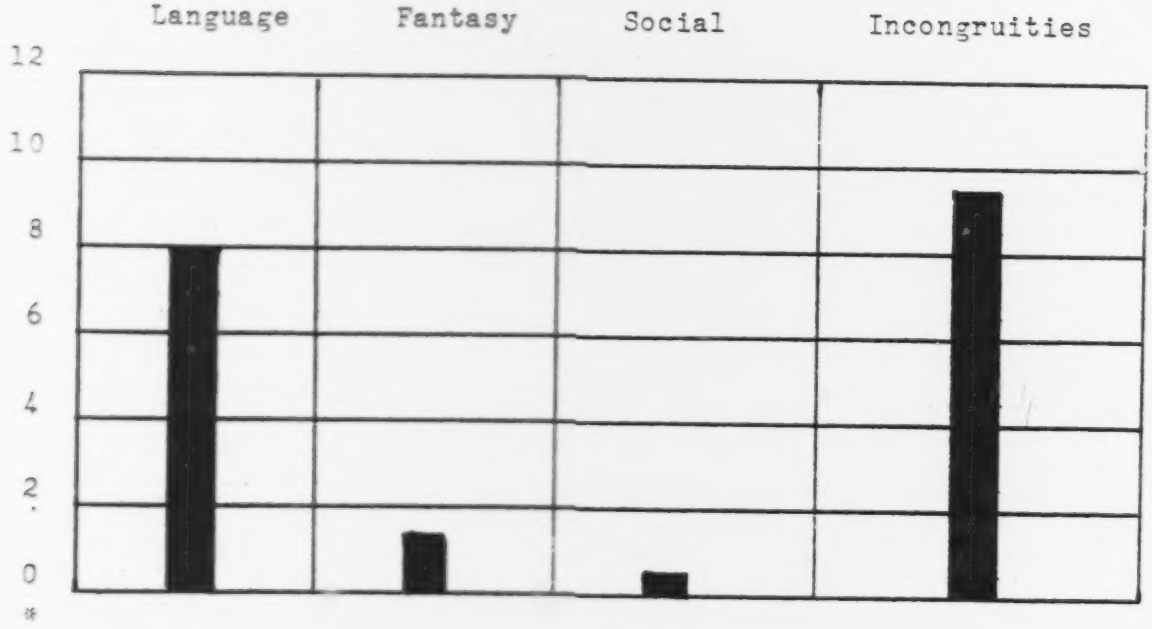
Results showed 3-year-olds not as sociable as 4-year-olds but more physically active, more diverted, more giggly, and thoroughly delighted in the act of misnaming objects and people. The 4-year-olds, now enjoying each other's company, engaged in flights of fantasy and in tales of superhuman confrontations in the world of space and make believe. All these activities were accompanied by colorful, descriptive language for sound effects.

The 5-year-olds, less socially cooperative, more critical and argumentative, used language to tease and to taunt. Above all, other people's mistakes brought immediate laughter. Silly answers to silly questions, incongruities, tall stories, riddles, and awareness of their own knowledge or rightness when things went wrong were pleasurable experiences.

The taping exercise, though the environment or the attendance did not remain stable, helped staff become more

Table 3

Laughter Response from Taping



Note: Subjects were 5-year-olds

* = Number of Responses

aware of the differences in laughter responses for different age groups (see Table 4). In all cases, the taping highlighted the use of language in all settings as a stimulating element.

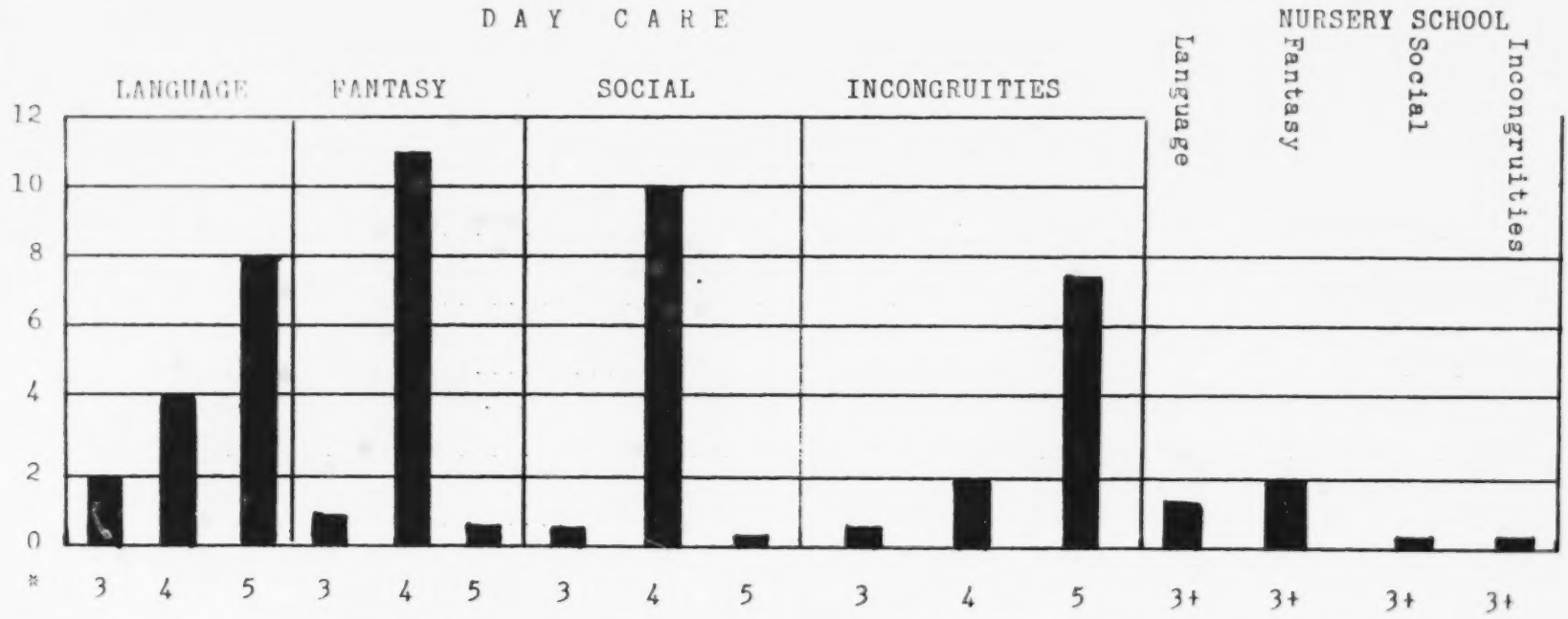
To some, words were fascinating because of their sounds; to others words conjured up images; to others, the juxtaposition of reality and absurdity through misnaming was intriguing.

An attempt was made to compare lesson plans over a period of time (see Appendix A) to see if teachers planned more for specific laughter and fun times as the practicum progressed. This was not feasible because lesson plans were being used for the wrong reasons. They were being used as time schedules and not being used to guide teachers through developmental concepts over a period of time. This was a valuable discovery, not for this study, but for future classroom use. September 1985 will include, in the orientation days for staff, time to rework the proper use of lesson plans. Now that staff members have become more sensitive to humor and laughter responses in different age groups, it seems reasonable to assume that a freer, more playful approach will become a part of their teaching technique and their lesson planning.

A letter was written to all parents and staff asking them to participate in this practicum by collecting laugh data on index cards, by taking a presurvey and a postsurvey, and by

Table 4

Laughter Responses from Tapes



Note: Figures (3, 4, 5, and 3+) indicate ages of children

* = Number of Responses

attending two seminars. A summary was made to compare the presurvey and the postsurvey (see Appendix O). It was found in the presurvey that 71% already believed that laughter was an important component for lessening tension and for good health. Over 50% of the adults thought children were funny but they were not sure if children laughed at the same things that adults did. Most presurvey responses suggested that adults had no idea that laughter and humor might be different according to age categories. Most adults were willing to explore ideas about laughter but less than 50% were willing to do so in night meetings. The attendance figures for the staff/parent meetings verified this fact. They dropped by 50% between the first and second meetings. However, 75% of the group was willing to document laughter, in home or in school settings, on three-by-five index cards.

In less than a month's time, 100 cards were collected which identified the child's age, sex, the activity, and the laughter it provoked. The staff was especially active in this activity adding laughter to many a long day or staff meeting by sharing a recorded incident. A sample of cards is provided (see Appendix M), which not only shows the recorded incident but also suggests an explanation for the laughter (see Table 5). This exercise certainly highlighted a sense of awareness that laughter is not only necessary but a pleasurable experience in daily affairs whether in school or at home.

Insert Table 5 about here

The second parent/staff meeting examined the card collection which, coincidentally, fell neatly into three separate age groups of 3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds. The cards reinforced some of the taping analyses. Three-year-olds laughed at misnaming, mislabeling, silliness, and pleasurable physical experiences. Four-year-olds enjoyed their sociability, their use of language (especially the so-called "naughty" or bathroom words), and found laughter a relief from embarrassment. The 5-year-olds record went off the chart with delight in teasing, fooling adults, and catching them at their own mistakes (see Table 3).

The sharing of cards found parents and staff reading some incidents and wondering, "What was so funny?" They began to realize that children do not laugh at the same things that please adults, and conversely, that adult humor does not necessarily please children. For example, all adults laughed when they were told of a serious conversation between two 4 ½-year-old girls:

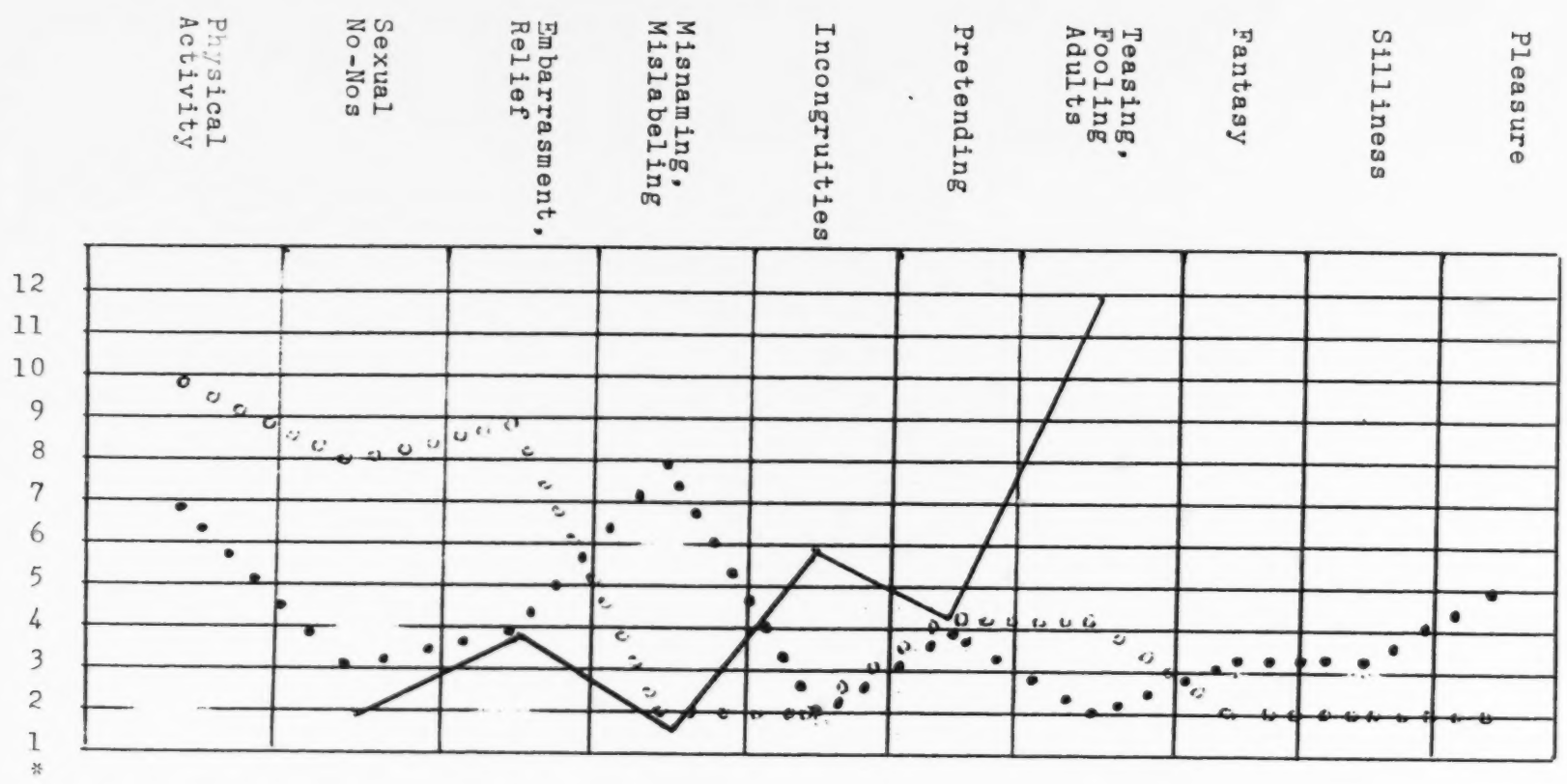
First child: "I'm going to be a ballerina when I grow up."

Second child: "Oh good! I am, too. I'll see you there!"

Humor and laughter can be found on many levels and enjoyed in different depths according to one's age, experience, and intelligence. Results of the postsurvey given to staff and

Table 5

Laughter Responses from File Cards



Note: . . . . . = 3-year-olds

o o o o o o = 4-year-olds

——————— = 5-year-olds

* = Number of Responses

parents at the conclusion of the practicum showed that 90% were more aware of children's humor and reasons for their laughter. Over 80% said that relationships with children had improved and that adults laughed more. The card collection heightened their awareness of laughter by 63%. One hundred percent found that laughter eases tension and decreases hostility. Ninety percent of the adults said they would make time for laughter (see Appendix O).

A book list of age-appropriate, humorous stories was compiled by the director and staff. Monson's study of Humor in Literature (1974) was of great use. The staff's contributions were the names of books successfully used in their classrooms. Thirty-two titles, authors, and publishers were listed and distributed to all staff and parents whether or not they participated in the practicum (see Appendix L).

Implementation of this practicum took a period of 3 ½ months. During this time, staff members did begin to understand that laughter and play not only were healthy, but helpful. Laughter and play could be used to dilute anger. One teacher reported that she felt great hostility toward a difficult child in her group. The teacher's patience was tested by the annoying, persistent, negative behavior of the child. The teacher experimented by answering the child's annoying questions with a silly, inappropriate response. For example, the child's constant demand to be leader was not answered by a logical explanation that it was not his turn, but by a silly statement,

"Leader, to be leader on Tuesday, you have to use glue spray." The child laughed at the nonsense, so did the teacher; and her anger dissipated.

This was not only an exciting discovery but a practical one, soon taken up by another staff member with a 5-year-old daughter. The staff/mother reported that when her own hostility could be diluted by a silly remark, the child's surprise was evident. She changed her behavior because she was not annoying her mother.

The second discovery was that when a staff member with the 4-year-olds saw that the 5-year-olds laughed at adult mistakes, she was more willing to laugh at her own. She had very high expectations for her own teaching performance which caused her to be inflexible and controlling. As she learned to let laughter into her classroom, she appeared to be more relaxed and less demanding of order or perfection. Water on the floor turned from disapproval to a "mop-flop party."

Conclusions

The implementation of this practicum brought a lively environment into The Children's Center, helped staff and parents understand children's humor, and encouraged young and old to use laughter with preschool children.

Though the implementation period is over, some of the work is still being carried on. Staff members concluded that collecting cards was helpful in their skills of observation, so they are continuing to collect them.

The book list, which hopefully will be increased, will be helpful for activity planning for specific age groups which will include acting out stories and being read to. It was decided that if both of these concrete activities continued, the collection of cards and book titles, then there will be a constant awareness for the need for laughter in the minds of the staff members.

The tapings were helpful because they recorded actual happenings and all participants were known. While the tapes were recording laughter responses, the staff also heard their own social participation, their tone of voice, their own controlling manner, and their teaching techniques. This exposure was found helpful. It was concluded that more taping should be done. If observations by tape or video are more frequent, then staff members' self-consciousness will disappear and the intrusive quality of being observed will diminish. Staff members can help themselves improve their relationships with children by studying the tapes.

The importance of language, including proper or improper use of words, for all ages is an important contribution of the practicum. It is concluded that more silly talk, more rhyming, more mislabeling, and more incongruous statements by the staff will elicit laughter responses from children of any age. In all stages of development, words are a key in making time for laughter in a preschool setting.

Lesson plan comparisons were not helpful. The discovery of their misuse was important to the director who realized the

better understanding of the purpose of lesson plans must be included in future staff meetings.

The postsurvey given to parents and staff concluded that the practicum experience helped them become more aware of their children's humor and the reasons for their laughter. They can now better understand McGhee's statement (1979) that laughter and humor are essential for mental health. They can now agree with Wolfenstein's claim (1954) that the ability to joke and laugh is an important emotional resource. They agree that laughter eases tension and decreases hostility.

The environment of the preschool setting was certainly more lively during the practicum experience. The staff's participation was outstanding. The idea that the need for laughter can be considered serious business is a new thought to many.

One staff member brought in an undated article discussing research carried out by a Laughter Project at the University of California at Santa Barbara. There they found that laughter reduced stress in adults as well as or better than more complex biofeedback training programs. In the same article, the Berkeley Wellness Newsletter, psychologist Jeffrey Goldstein of Temple University said that laughter is related in several ways to longevity.

It is ironic that in this country, life expectancy is increasing at the same time that childhood playtime seems to be decreasing. Societal changes in the family structure,

economic pressure, television's exposure to violence, and academic pressure in preschools all affect and often limit childhood's special time for play and laughter.

We must provide a childhood for our children which will reduce stress through playful experiences accompanied by laughter. We might not only be improving children's lives, but extending them. This will be a true fulfillment of the idea that we must make time for laughter--our children's health and lives might depend on it.

The goals for the practicum which desired an extension of childhood through play and laughter have been met. Specific objectives for more flexible programming and less tension from staff were improved over the 3-month period when laughter was discovered as a valuable resource. It is reasonable to assume that staff will find increased pleasure in working with children because they have learned to agree with Eastman (1936) who said that play and laughter belong with children wherever they are--even in a preschool setting. When staff members are less controlling, more fun, and more laughingly responsive, it is safe to assume that The Children's Center will be a happier place. This will indeed fulfill the purpose of this practicum. All adults, 100%, said they will try to make room for laughter in the lives of their young children. This was the goal hoped for many months ago. The positive conclusions obtained demonstrate a successful completion of such a goal. The Children's Center will be a happier place because adults agreed to make time for laughter.

Permission was given (see Appendix P) by M. Stevens (1984) to include the following cartoon in this study (see Illustration 1). It illustrates the decreasing incidence of laughter, thus making our environment unhealthy, stressful, and serious.

Insert Illustration 1 about here

However, this practicum is an encouragement that change is possible. Life might not become easier, but laughter can make it seem more fun and even bearable for so many under stress. We must begin at the beginning with children and their caregivers. We must take laughter seriously.

Recommendations

The difficulty in taping classrooms could be overcome by the use of viodotaping. It is necessary to visually observe the activities which produce laughter responses. Relying on an auditory record negates recognition of behaviors which are funny or absurd, but not vocal. It makes the identification of initiators difficult and does not give clarity to relationships between teacher and child or child and child. The interplay in socialization must be seen as well as heard to pick up gestures and nuances. Often it is the smile of the teacher, the silliness of a child's position, or the doll dressed backwards which provokes laughter. This data would be recorded on videotape.

Illustration 1

LIVING IN THE U.S.A.

Drawing by M. Stevens; © 1984
The New Yorker Magazine, Inc.

Taping of classrooms should be incorporated into the regular training program for the staff. By more frequent exposure to mechanical or personal observation of their work, staff members would not be self-conscious or uncomfortable during "special" tapings.

Using videotape would not demand knowledge of or names of children whose voices are recorded. The plain taping demands this recognition or recall. This is too difficult if one is not the classroom teacher. The videotape would identify the children.

Taping the classrooms would best be done near the beginning of the school year. At that time, attendance is better because school vacations, holidays, snowdays, and contagious diseases do not take their toll as they do in the winter months. The late spring and early summer finds outdoor play, day trips, hikes, and picnics a part of the daily activities making taping almost impossible. Parent attendance might improve if workshops were held in the fall. Their schedules in spring and summer include end-of-the-year activities in public school, scouts, church, and recreation programs which conflict with workshop planning.

The use of lesson plans is not recommended if plans are used more for time scheduling than sequencing stages of developmental growth. The idea of comparing lesson plans was to see if staff members added more time for laughter through their activities. Comparisons can be done only if the staff

members actually plan lessons. This was impossible because they viewed a schedule as a daily lesson plan.

The card collecting activity was very successful. It gave everyone who wanted to participate a valuable way to contribute without attending meetings. It was especially valuable for staff members who shared cards often at break time, meal time, or at staff meetings. It may be more helpful if the time for collecting cards were extended from a one-month period to three months. This will increase the size of the sample and give more validity to an interpretation of the collection. An effort should be made to involve more parents.

Categories of laughter responses, compiled after taping, should be the same as the categories used for the compilation of the index cards. Parents should be encouraged to add to the book list of humor-appropriate stories. Their participation would help to develop a larger book list with more varied stories.

Every newsletter to parents should include one or two funny anecdotes of children, some from the index cards, others from current observation. This will be a constant reminder that laughter is a necessary ingredient in a child's life, that children are funny, and that adults can enjoy their funniness.

It is recommended that the collection of cards be continued for an entire year, rather than for only three months. This will help staff and parents to keep on the alert in their observations of children's laughing behavior.

Making more time for laughter in a preschool setting provides a happy, healthy, and highly socializing environment. It is recommended that all parents and staff take laughter seriously and provide for its inclusion in the life of their preschool children.

Dissemination

1. The complete practicum will be kept in the library of The Children's Center. The staff will be encouraged to read it as part of their yearly workshop orientation held just before public school begins in late summer.

2. A letter of thanks was sent out to all parents and staff of The Children's Center. In this letter, the writer briefly described the practicum and the results of the card collection. The book list also was included. Parents were encouraged to borrow the practicum for their own reading and to continue with the collection of index cards and appropriate funny books to add to the existing collection.

3. The Connecticut State Department of Human Resources will hold a two-day early childhood conference in the fall of 1985. The writer has been asked to participate in discussing early childhood programs. In so doing, the need for laughter in a preschool setting will be included and this practicum will be the resource for part of this workshop.

4. Paul McGhee's research work was such a help to the writer that a copy of this practicum will be sent to him with thanks for his fine material.

5. The Southwestern Connecticut Association for the Education of Young Children has been advised that a report of this practicum will be gladly given at an area meeting.

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Week beginning 1/7/85 Week ending 1/11/85

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
7:00-9:00 Free Play 9:00 Morning Meeting 9:20 Snack Time 10:00 Play in movement room with long tunnels out while on the blacktop 10:30 Play group participation games 11:00 Dance to Michael Jackson 11:45 Use bathroom get ready for lunch 12:00 Lunchtime 12:45 Nap time 3:30 Snack time	7:00 9:00 Free Play 9:00 Use our flannel board, count and sort similar objects 9:30 Snack Time 10:00 Read in the Reading Booth 10:30 Mr. Pagoo 11:00 Outdoor play 11:45 Get ready for lunch 12:00 Lunchtime 12:45 Nap time 3:30 Snack time 4:00 Use our counting cards, strings and beads - Light bright	7:00-9:00 Free Play 9:00 Water Play and ice table 9:30 Snack Time Downtown Library visit 11:00 Cut with scissors, color with magic markers 11:30 Song time 12:00 Lunchtime 12:45 Nap time 3:30 Snack time 4:00 Outdoor play	7:00-8:30 Free Play 8:30 Read our nursery rhymes then have Kids act them out. 9:00- 9:30 Snack time 10:00 Movement 10:30 Mr. Pagoo 11:00 Take a walk around the block 12:00 Lunchtime 12:45 Nap time 3:30 Snack time 4:00 Play the shadow game	7:00-8:30 Free Play 8:30 Start mixing batter for brownies. Eat them for our afternoon snack 9:30 Snack time 10:00 Ride bikes Outside; if rainy, indoor play on tumbling mats 11:00 Read Sam the Squirrel Talk about animals hibernating growing healthy fur etc. 11:30 Learn song, "I'm a Little Snowflake" 12:00 Lunchtime 12:45 Nap time 3:30 Snack - eat brownies

Laughter

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Week beginning Feb. 4 Week ending Feb. 8

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Meeting: Plan to finger print. Review the sound taught by the letter S.	Meeting: Introduce the letter T, the ticking clock sound.	Meeting: talk about telephones and the importance of knowing one's phone number.	Meeting: Tell the story of Tony the trucker. Have the Children listen for the ticking clock sound.	Meeting: Prepare the children for the day's activities
Singing with Mimi's Children Three Bears Song Bingo Frosty Do ra me If I had a rooster	Snack	Set up a telephone corner where the children can practice dialing their phone numbers. Snack: Movies.	Movement with Mimi at 9:30. Snack	
Snack Project: Finger Paint Alternate activity: 1) Continue role playing Sally the Salesgirl. 2. Take small groups to the Movement room for scarf dancing	Project: Make clocks with hands that turn using metal fasteners Have children trace dotted numbers on their clocks.	Project: Make paper telephones Write each child's number on his telephone. Have the children trace the dots.	Project: Practice writing the letter T. Make T trees. Mr. Pazoo 11:30	Project: Arts and Crafts. Would you like me to run off names for Valentine's Day cards?

Laughter

58

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Week beginning 2-25-85 Week ending 3-1-85

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
9:00 - Snack 9:30 - Opening Meeting 9:45 - Read "Red Balloon" 10:15 - Outside 10:45 - Color Balloon Pictures	9:45 - Body Game w/ good health habits 10:00 - Movement	9:40 - Walk to Library 10:40 - Bikes - outside	9:30 10:45 } Movement 10:45 - 11:10 - Outside Play	9:30 - Introduce and play bingo 10:15 - Outside or Movement
w/ red Balloon - par letter (B) 11:10 - Wash for lunch 11:15 - Lunch	w/ Judy 10:35 Make butter letter (B) 11:00 Read Red Balloon (Again) 11:10 - Wash for lunch	Letter (B) 11:10 - Wash 11:15 - Lunch 11:45 - Bus	11:10 - Wash 11:15 - Lunch 11:45 - Bus 12:00 Outside	w/ Linda 10:30 Mr. Pazoo w/ Rosemary 11:15 - Lunch
11:45 - Bus Outside 11:15 Meet bus 12:30 - Lunch 1:00 - Nickelodeon	11:15 - Lunch 11:45 - Bus 12:00 - Outside 12:15 - Wait for bus	12:00 Outside 12:15 Wait for bus 12:30 - Lunch 1:00 - Nickelodeon	12:15 - Wait for bus 12:30 - Lunch 1:00 - Nickelodeon 1:30 Nap	11:45 - Bus 12:00 - Outside 12:15 - Wait for bus 12:30 - Lunch
1:30 - Nap	12:30 - Lunch 1:00 - Nickelodeon 1:30 - Nap	1:30 - Nap		1:00 - Nickelodeon 1:30 - Nap

Laughter

59

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THE CHILDREN'S CENTER
11A ASPETUCK AVENUE
NEW MILFORD, CONNECTICUT 06776
(203) 354-1883

APPENDIX B

EXAMPLES OF DIFFICULTIES OF
WORK INCENTIVE (WIN) APPLICANTS

Annette M. Lawing
Department of Human Resources
1179 Main Street
Hartford, Ct. 06103

Oct 15, 1984

Dear Annette;

I write to share frustration. After a wonderful NIS grant for our pilot before and after school program it has been impossible to find a competent responsible person to be in charge of that older group of children. Since we are required to go through the Danbury WIN office we have done so without worthwhile results.

For example:
- one had a young baby and could not set up care for it while she worked
- one had terrible asthma and NO CAR
- one couldn't read, had a personal grudge against authority figures
- one cancelled appointment interview, wage too low
- one could not work hours we needed
- one no car
- one started but quit-got a better job-more pay
- one phone interview-person unacceptable

My question to you is-can I hire from other than WIN applicants for the Teacher in charge position? We now have 15 children enrolled and an aide is inappropriate-especially from WIN applicants.

I am in touch with the Danbury WIN office. Arnold McNeal is co-operative but not discerning in the people he sends to me. However, that might be all he has to choose from!

Sincerely,

Barbara

Barbara B. Hamlin
Director

BBH:st

Staff Profile of State Funded Center

The staff aides were on the State Welfare rolls. This was a criteria, established by the State, for hiring.

1 Teacher Aide

Single parent with three children. One of the children under psychiatric care. The mother under counseling with Child and Family Services.

1 Teacher Aide

Single parent with two children. One child in special education class in public school for learning disability.

1 Teacher Aide

Single parent with one child.

1 Bookkeeper

Single parent with one son, born when the mother was 15, and who is a school dropout and in constant trouble with police and who does not work. Mother was a victim of child abuse.

1 Cook

Single parent with one child. Mother has past history of drugs.

All victims of divorce, drugs and poverty level existence.

January, 198

APPENDIX D

TALLY SHEET I

Number in Group _____

Date taped _____ Laughter 65

Time taped _____

Environment _____

(Structured, Free, Lunch)

TALLY SHEET I

of

Laughter

Code Names	Initiated	Contributed	Direct Response	Involved	Other
T					
TA					
Child 1					
Child 2					
Child 3					
Child 4					
Child 5					
Child 6					
Child 7					
Child 8					
Child 9					
Child 10					
Child 11					
Child 12					
Child 13					
Child 14					

APPENDIX E

TALLY SHEET II

Number in Group _____

Date taped _____

Time taped _____

67

TALLY SHEET II

Reasons Behind Laughter

	Child's Name	Language/ Words	Fantasy	Situation Incongruities	Social	Discovery/ New Exp.	O
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							
8							
9							
10							
11							
12							
13							
14							
	TEACHER						
	TEACHER AIDE						
	Explanations:	+Play on names +Funny sounds +Finger/word games +Rhyming words +Repetition +Singing	-Pretending -Absurdities -Exaggeration	-Actions -Events -Excitement -Enthusiasm -Incongruities	-Joking +Quarrel -Contagious -Mistakes -Nervous situation -Stress -Friendship	-Discovery -Accomplishment	

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APPENDIX F

TEACHER AND PARENT EVALUATION FORM
PRESURVEY

Teacher and Parent Evaluation Form 69

I

Please indicate how strongly you feel about the questions on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the strongest feeling and 1 being the least. Please circle the number which best identifies your feelings.

1.	Had you ever thought that laughter is a necessary ingredient for good health?	5	4	3	2	1
2.	Do you think that it is?	5	4	3	2	1
3.	Do you think that laughter can lessen feelings of hostility?	5	4	3	2	1
4.	Do you like to laugh?	5	4	3	2	1
5.	Do you think children are funny?	5	4	3	2	1
6.	Do you think children laugh at the same things you do?	5	4	3	2	1
7.	Do they make you laugh?	5	4	3	2	1
8.	Are you uncomfortable if they laugh at you? at each other?	5	4	3	2	1
9.	Do you know what makes children of different ages laugh?	5	4	3	2	1
10.	Do you know why certain children's books are funny?	5	4	3	2	1
11.	Do you think girls laugh more than boys?	5	4	3	2	1
12.	Do you think boys laugh more than girls?	5	4	3	2	1
13.	Are you willing to explore children's ideas of humor and their reasons for laughter?	5	4	3	2	1
14.	Would you come to two parent meetings where this would be discussed?	5	4	3	2	1
15.	Would you help by writing children's laughing experiences on a 3" x 5" card for a collection which might be made into a book?	5	4	3	2	1

Please write any comments you may have on the back of this page.

Please indicate with an "X" whether you are a parent or teacher or both.

____ Teacher ____ Parent

APPENDIX G TEACHER AND PARENT EVALUATION FORM

POSTSURVEY

Teacher and Parent Evaluation Form

II

Please indicate how strongly you feel about the questions on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the strongest feeling and 1 being the least. Please circle the number which best identifies your feelings.

1.	**Are you more aware of children's humor, their reason for laughing than you were before?**	5 4 3 2 1
2.	**Do you think you have added a little more laughter into your relationship with your children/students?**	5 4 3 2 1
3.	**Have you laughed more?**	5 4 3 2 1
4.	**Did making the card collection heighten your awareness?**	5 4 3 2 1
5.	**Do you understand the difference in age levels which causes differences in laughter?**	5 4 3 2 1
6.	**Do you think laughing more eases tension, hostility and stress?**	5 4 3 2 1
7.	**Have you experienced any increase in fun, humor or laughting in your relationship with your child/children?**	5 4 3 2 1
8.	**Have you made time for laughter?**	5 4 3 2 1

Please write any comments you may have on the back of this page.

Please indicate with an "X" whether you are a parent or teacher or both.

____ Teacher ____ Parent

APPENDIX H

Laughter

SAMPLE OF TAPING RECORDS BEFORE
TRANSFERRING TO TALLY SHEET

73

5 Year olds 1 Teacher

2/27/85 10:30am - 11:00am Classroom

Group project involving balloons. Frank makes whistle sounds, laughs, child responds. Frank sings out: "eenie, meenie, teenie", laughs as does one other child in response. Jeff says: "ow, ow" and laughs. Jimmy tries to keep balloon in the air by tapping, laughs.

3/6/85 9:15am - 9:45am Classroom

Morning meeting about spiders: various kinds, webs and differences.

Listening exercise with Weekly Readers drawing "under", "over", etc., following instructions given by the teacher.

Got ready to walk to library for story time and book talk.

5/7/85 9:00am - 9:40am Snack time
sitting around a large round table

Conversation is nonstop. Teacher and aide have little input. Laughter is often giggly, contagious and usually in response to silly sayings, sounds and facial expressions. It was difficult to pick up initiators. So many times, the conversation was too loud and very, very busy.

3 Year Olds 1 Teacher 1 Teacher Aide

3/1/85 9:00am - 9:30am Classroom
Structured

Teacher led a discussion about Spring time.
There was a lot of conversation by all.
One child pretended he was a leaf.
One child laughed in response.

3/1/85 9:30am - 10:00am Snack time

A lot of conversation around eating table.
Children initiated their own singing of "Bingo Was His Name".
Child talks about babies, says: "My mom, mom, mom, mom...".
Teacher and aide laugh.
Child sing, pretends she is a dog (Bingo) then goes: "Bow-wow-wow" and laughs.

10:00am - 10:45am Classroom
Structured

The morning group play was musical chairs. At first the children liked the physical activity of getting it ready. When play started, many dropped. Two left to finish. Pretend play followed: going to market and taking each other's picture with a pretend camera. This was enjoyed as evident by the amount of involvement. The final activity was to watch the gerbil run around in his wheel. Many children laughed at this.

Nursery School 1 Teacher 1 Aide

2/27/85 10:00am - 10:30am Classroom
Structured and Free Play

Show and Tell Time. One girl shows a straw. She tries to describe it. It bends by mistake. The teacher aid laughs and says: "You have a bending straw!"
Later, some in the housekeeping area playing house. One boy says: "Look at the baby.", then: "I got a baby."--laughs and so do three others.
One child laughs when wrong size block won't balance on small one.

3/5/85 10:00am - 10:45am Classroom
Structured

Blowing bubbles like the "March wind" project, snack time, then Show and Tell Time. Children and teacher sitting in a circle on the floor. Turns taken to talk about something special. Then group divided up, one half for spider project, other half for making kites.

Between bubbles blowing and snack, one child looked for his pet "Snoopy". He asked: "Where's my Snoopy, in my bed?". Teacher answered: "Where do you keep it?". Child: "I don't know." "I see it, I see it"--laughs. "Here's Snoopy. I'm coming, I'm coming...". Two children laugh with him.

Another child is overheard doing monster play. He pretends something and says: "yo, yo, yo, yo, yo, yo" in a deep voice and laughs. Later does it again saying: "wang, wang, wang, wang" and laughs. In the background, a child says: "You're kicking me." and laughs.

Snacktime, a child was asked if he wanted milk with his meal or water. His answer: "I want everything you have.". Teacher aide laughed.

3/8/85 10:00am Classroom

Group divided in two and involved in making Mother's Day gifts, painting jars, planting seeds. The other group involved in block building. Activities were switched when gifts were finished. All laughter was almost spontaneous involving actions such as building and knocking down blocks, dialing a telephone or falling pegs.

4 Year Olds 1 Teacher 1 Teacher Aide

2/22/85 11:30am - 12:30pm Free Play
Three boys in the block corner

All very involved building a roadway and a bridge- "the biggest bridge ever". A car is sent down the road with a child saying: "Whee! Whee!", in an excited voice. The car goes off the road-laughter by the two other boys.
"Let's go backwards. Make more bridge." Car goes off track again. Two boys, more laughter. Boys imitate car sounds: "Zoom, zoom, whee!". "Honk, honk." All giggle or laugh.

Six other children playing and working at cutting, coloring, listening to a record story. All interested-lots of conversation, no laughter.

Before lunch, blocks to be put away. "Everybody, let's go skating." says one boy as he puts his foot on a block and holds it on with a rubber band. Four children answer: "Yeah, yeah." and laugh.

Aide tells teacher about an incident. Teacher laughs.

One child just after leaving the track corner tries to pick up one of the other children. As he picks him up, he says: "I got him, I got him!" and laughs.

2/25/85 9:30am - 10:00am Class meeting time and story

Teacher read story of Red Balloon.
Teacher read that the balloon "followed the principal".
One child laughed.

New word sound "sh" introduced with shadow play. All children showed their shadow in front of slide projector. When teacher showed her big shadow, one child laughed.

Snack time (free play): Vacuum cleaner sound by one child-laughed at by another. Jason E. says: "I forgot your name. Oh, I know-E ger beaver!" Tommy laughs. One sings: "Soupy dooey-doo-where are you? Soupy do". Two laugh. "Bang, bang (hammering) going to club house." Three children laugh.

Playing house: "See my cookie-cookie-pookie all of you?" Two or three children laugh. Someone imitates a cat "meow", someone else laughs. "Pretend we're having a picnic. Peanut crackers, crack, crack."

4/29/85 10:00am - 11:00am Classroom
Structured

The project was to make pizzas which the children would then have for lunch. When teacher called a child by his/her name, prefaced by the word "chef", laughter followed. Pushing dough with a spoon was a new experience. One child was caught eating the dough-had an embarrassed laugh. Teacher very involved with the small group. Singing, talking, encouraging and making up silly names for the pizza. Lots of talk. Everyone busy. The rest of group is outside until their turn to make pizza.

APPENDIX I

SAMPLE OF RECORDED TALLY SHEETS

Number in Group 8

Date taped 2/27/85 Laughter

Time taped 10 - 10 [illegible]

Environment Classroom

(Structured, Free, Lunch)

79

TALLY SHEET I

of

Laughter

Code Names	Initiated	Contributed	Direct Response	Involved
T Judy				
TA Nancy		1		
Child 1 Chris				
Child 2 David				
Child 3 Drew				
Child 4 Scotty				
Child 5 Melanie				
Child 6 Evelyn				
Child 7 Heidi				
Child 8 Christopher	1			
Child 9				
Child 10				
Child 11				
Child 12				
Child 13				
Child 14				

Number in Group _____

Date taped 2/27/85 Laughter

Time taped 10:10 [illegible] 80

TALLY SHEET II

Reasons Behind Laughter

	Child's Name	Language/ Words	Fantasy	Situation Incongruities	Social	Discovery / New Exp.	Other
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7			1111				
8				1			
9							
10							
11							
12							
13							
14							
	TEACHER						
	TEACHER AIDE			1			

Explanations:	+Play on names +Funny sounds +Finger/word games +Rhyming words +Repetition +Singing	-Pretending -Absurdities -Exaggeration	-Actions -Events -Excitement -Enthusiasm -Incongruities.	-Joking +Competition -Contagious -Mistakes -Nervous situation -Stress +Friendship	-Interest -Fear -Discovery -Accomplishment

Number in Group 3 in block area

Date taped 7/22/84 Laughter

Time taped ~~10:44~~ 11:50 12 81

Environment in classroom. Free

(Structured, Free, Lunch)

TALLY SHEET I

of

Laughter

Code Names	Initiated	Contributed	Direct Response	Involved	Other
Kathy T Sheri Carol T TA Nancy					
Child 1 Tanh					
Child 2 Karen					
Child 3 Jean					
Child 4 Chg					
Child 5 Randy					
Child 6 Lisa					
Child 7 Matt					
Child 8					
Child 9					
Child 10					
Child 11					
Child 12					
Child 13					
Child 14					

Age Group [illegible]

Number in Group [illegible]

Date taped 2/[illegible] Laughter

Time taped [illegible] 82

TALLY SHEET II

Reasons Behind Laughter

	Child's Name	Language/ Words	Fantasy	Situation Incongruities	Social	Discovery New E[illegible]	[illegible]
1	Joshua	1	1	1	1		
2	[illegible]		1	1	1		
3	Jason		1	1	1	1	1
4	Elizabeth		1		1		
5	Matt		1		1		
6	Shawn		1		1		
7	Kristy		1				
8	Shannon						
9							
10							
11							
12							
13							
14							
	TEACHER						
	TEACHER AIDE						

Explanations:	-Play on names -Funny sounds -Finger/word games -Rhyming words -Repetition -Singing	-Pretending -Absurdities -Exaggeration	-Actions -Events -Excitement -Enthusiasm -Incongruities	-Joking -Comparing -Contagious -Mistakes -Nervous situation -Stress -Friendship	-[illegible] -Fear -Disc[illegible] -Accomp[illegible] ment

Age Group 4 years

Number in Group 9

Laughter

Date taped 2/25/

Time taped 9:30-10: ·83

Environment Student

(Structured, Free, Lunch)

TALLY SHEET I

of

Laughter

Code Names	Initiated	Contributed	Direct Response	Involved	Other
T Kathy					
TA Chris					
Child 1 Josh					
Child 2 Kevin					
Child 3 Darin J.					
Child 4 Chaz					
Child 5 Randy					
Child 6 Shawn					
Child 7 Jamie					
Child 8 Matt					
Child 9 Susan					
Child 10 Tammy					
Child 11					
Child 12					
Child 13					
Child 14					

Age Group 3 year olds

Number in Group 10

Laughter

Date taped 7/25/80

Time taped 9:30-10, 11:30-12:4

Structured Free play

TALLY SHEET II

Reasons Behind Laughter

	Child's Name	Language/ Words	Fantasy	Situation Incongruities	Social	Discovery/ New Exp.	Other
1	Joshua	II	I	I	I		
2	Kim						
3	Jason J						
4	Eliz						
5	Randy						
6	Shawn	I		I	I		
7	Joan Ed.	II			I		
8	Matt		I				
9	Susan						
10	Tommy	III			I		
11							
12							
13							
14							
	TEACHER						
	TEACHER AIDE						

Explanations:

- Language/Words: +Play on names, +Funny sounds, +Finger/word games, +Rhyming words, +Repetition, +Singing
- Fantasy: -Pretending, -Absurdities, -Exaggeration
- Situation Incongruities: -Actions, -Events, -Excitement, -Enthusiasm, -Incongruities
- Social: -Joking, -Comparing, -Contagious, -Mistakes, -Nervous situation, -Stress, -Friendship
- Discovery/New Exp.: -Fear, -Acting

Outline for Parent/Staff Seminar #1

From the review of literature, the need for laughter will be discussed using various theories.

1. Laughter helps to remove the threat of a disturbing situation. Max Eastman suggests that laughter may be an instinct one has for making the best of a bad thing. It is a useful trait.

Example: when children spill milk at the lunch table or knock over a parent's lamp.

2. Children find satisfaction and pleasure in solving a tricky problem.

Example: hide the nickle in one of two closed hands. Guess which one it is in. Simple treasure hunts.

3. Laughter at characters when one suddenly discovers that one is better or smarter than others.

Exmaple: children have a hard time keeping a secret. They can hardly hold in the fact that they know something someone else doesn't.

4. Inversion is a technique used to create character humor, when a character lays a trap and is caught in it.

Example: Three Little Pigs and Hansel and Gretel

5. Incongruity and Surprise--research shows that the surprise began to emerge as a stimulus to children

at age four and incongruity at age five when the child is more intellectually mature.

Example: actual experience, when 4½ year old boy was introduced to "Sondae", a high school aide, he said: "Oh yea, my name is Tuesday."

Dr. Seuss books find incongruity as a humor stimulus.

After discussing the various theories, examples were asked for from staff or parents. All were asked to compile laughing incidents on index cards to share at the second meeting.

APPENDIX K

OUTLINE FOR PARENT/STAFF SEMINAR II

Outline for Seminar #2

1. From laugh cards collected by staff, have them act out the recorded incident. Make note of the difference between adult and child humor.

2. Play some tapes recorded in class which demonstrate children's laughter responses, whether they are in group, initiated by staff or child and reason for the response.

Discuss where staff helped or hindered the mood for laughter. Relate this to help or hinderance at home.

3. Ask parents for their cards. Share some of the observations. See if they can understand what makes each incident funny.

4. Discuss the possibility of making a book on laughter.

5. Take posttest.

APPENDIX L

LIST OF FUN BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

Books for Fun

Barrett, Judi	A snake is totally tail	Atheneum
" "	Animals should definitely not act like People	"
" "	Animals should definitely not wear clothing	"
Berenstain, Stan	The Bears' Vacation	Random House
" "	The Bike Lesson	" "
Ciardi, John	You Read it to Me, I'll Read it to You	Lippencott
Cerfi, Bennett	Book of Laughs	Random House
Collodi, Carlo	Pinocchio	N.Y. Penguin
Clearly, Beverly	Henry Huggins	Morrow
" "	Ramona the Pest	"
de Paola, Tomie	Fin M'Cook	Holiday House
Hazen, Barbara Shook	The Gorilla Did It	Atheneum
Heilbroner, Joan	Robert the Rose Horse	Random House
Hoff, Syet	Sammy the Seal	Harper & Row
" "	Dinosaurs' Do's and Don't	" "
Lopshire, Robert	Put Me in the Zoo	Random House
McClintock, M.	A Fly Went By	Random House
Milne, A. A.	Winnie the Pooh	
Slepian, Jan & Seiciler, A.	The Hungry Thing	Scholastic Books Follet Publg. Co.
Slobodkina, Esphyr	Caps for Sale	Library of Congress
Tether, Graham	The Hair Book	Random House
White, E. B.	Charlotte's Web	
Zion, Gene	Harry By the Sea	Penguin Books
" "	Harry the Dirty Dog	" "

Seuss, Dr.	The Cat in the Hat	Random House
" "	Green Eggs and Ham	" "
" "	The Cat in the Hat Comes Back	" "
" "	Marvin Mooney, Will You Please Go Now	" "
" "	One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish	" "

APPENDIX M

SAMPLE OF CARD COLLECTION

The teacher arrived on the playyard with ten felt hats on her head pretending to be the peddler from the book Caps for Sale. The children climbed up on the tire tree while the teacher pretended to sleep. Soon they stole her hats. All laughed as this activity was repeated over and over again giving each child a chance to be the peddler

4 Year Olds

↑ Pretending is a great source for laughter. ↑

The teacher and the 4 year olds were playing charades. Randy is pretending to ride a bicycle. Alex says: "I know he riding a bike." Karen corrects her: "You can't call that a bike, it's a bicycle." They argue. Teacher says: "It's alright to call a bicycle a bike. Just don't call it a popsicle!" Everyone laughs.

↑ Humor can dilute hostility or divert an argument. ↑

The teacher aid tells one 4 year old and two 3 year olds that it is snowing outside. It is really warm and sunny. The children go to the window to look for the snow. The aid says: "I fooled you." The children laugh.

↑ Playing tricks, getting caught can be funny. ↑

The 3 year olds are playing a game called "roll-over". They act out the song of the same name, where each time a child rolls over another child falls out of bed. Here, they pretend to fall out of bed as they say "roll-over". This causes heavy, belly laughter.

Physical activity often arouses laughter.

In a group of 4 year olds at circle time, one child calls his friend by her correct name, then begins to rhyme her name with nonsense words. The girl giggles.

Use of words that rhyme or have funny sounds is laughter provoking.

A 4 year old asks her teacher for a pillow at naptime. The teacher rolled up a blanket and gave it to her saying: "Here is your pillow." The child laughed.

The mislabeling and the incongruity make for laughter.

APPENDIX N

LETTER OF SUMMATION AND THANKS
TO PARENTS AND STAFF

July, 1985

Dear Staff and Parents,

The small results of the practicum on laughter done this spring at the Children's Center might be of interest to you.

Projections of life expectancy increase with new scientific discoveries. Some say living to be 100 years old will not be unusual. If this is the case, then it is very important that childhood be free of stress and heavily seasoned with laughter.

A review of the literature finds the follwoing statements:

1. Humor and laughter are essential for mental health.

2. Absence of humor and laughter in children is a sign of distress.

3. Most children want to share their humor.

4. Joking helps make light of disappointment.

5. Play and laughter belong with children wherever they are.

6. Preschool pressures from parents, teachers, rules, standards, moralities and feelings of inferiority are released through laughter.

The Children's Center is concerned with the healthy development of all children enrolled. Learning from experience has long been favored by the Center's teachers. It is essential that children test, taste, touch, tempt and transform the environment so they may grow in social, emotional, mental and physical areas of development. However, to encourage the learning without laughter would be a disservice not only to children but to parents and teachers as well. It is good for us to realize that children laugh at different things than adults do. They think differently. The attached chart, compiled from cards parents and staff collected, show that differences in laughter response are noticable between 3, 4, and 5 year olds.

Thank you for entrusting your children to our care. For those who helped with this small study, I am most grateful. If any one of us has been made more aware that laughter has a significant place in the lives of our children then, in a small way, we will help relieve children of the stress that seems to be invading childhood and robbing them of their time for laughter.

Sincerely,

Barbara Hamlin

Barbara B. Hamlin
Director

APPENDIX O

SUMMARY OF PRESURVEY AND
POSTSURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

PRESURVEY SUMMARY

The presurvey was given to:

Teachers	7
Parents	13
Teacher/Parents	8
Total	28

1. Seventy-one percent found laughter a component of importance for good health.
2. Seventy percent found laughter good for lessening tension.
3. Most had no idea of different laughter responses for different age levels.
4. Most were willing to explore ideas about laughter.
5. Less than 50% were willing to come to night meetings.
6. Seventy-one percent said they would participate in the card collection.

POSTSURVEY SUMMARY

The postsurvey was given to:

Teachers	2
Parents	5
Teacher/Parents	6
Total	13

1. Ninety percent said they were more aware of children's humor and the reason for their laughter.
2. Over 80% said their relationships with children had improved.
3. Over 80% said they, the adults, laughed more.
4. The card collection heightened their awareness by 63%.
5. They increased their knowledge about age level differences in humor by 90%.
6. One hundred percent said laughter eased tension and decreased hostility.
7. Ninety percent said they would try to make time for laughter.

THE
NEW YORKER
25 WEST 43RD STREET
NEW YORK, N. Y. 10036

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July 15, 1985

Ms. Barbara Hamlin, Director
The Children's Center
11A Aspetuck Avenue
New Milford, Connecticut 06776

Dear Ms. Hamlin:

In reply to your letter of July 9 regarding permission to reproduce the drawing by Mick Stevens on page 35 of our issue of June 25, 1984 in your thesis on laughter and humor in preschool children:

We are hereby glad to add our permission to that of Mr. Stevens upon the following conditions:

1. That the three-panel drawing be reproduced in full and unchanged;

2. that the following notice appear immediately below the reproduction:

Drawing by M. Stevens; © 1984
The New Yorker Magazine, Inc.

Sincerely yours,

Jill Frisch

Jill Frisch

*Captionless 3-panel drawing. Over-all title: LIVING IN THE U.S.A.